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ABSTRACT

This report compares special education legislation and services for students with disabilities in Taiwan and the United States. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in the United States and the Special Education Act of 1984 in Taiwan are found to have similar elements. Funding of special education services, however, is different in the two countries. In Taiwan, the central government requires that 3 percent of the whole education budget of the central government be devoted to special education. An additional 5 percent of the whole local government education budget is devoted to special education. The percentage of special education students in each country based on disability area is also somewhat different. Taiwan contains a separate category for facial deformities, which is not used in the United States. In addition, in Taiwan all hearing impairments are categorized under a single category and the category of deaf-blind is not used. The greatest difference is in the high percentage of students with disabilities in Taiwan included in the category of mental retardation. The United States, by contrast, has higher percentages of students identified as having speech impairments and learning disabilities. Differences in special education teacher certification are also noted in the report. (CR)

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A Comparison of Special Education Service Delivery in the United States and Taiwan

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Abstract

This article focuses on the similarities and differences of special education and special education service delivery in the United States, particularly in South Dakota, and practices in central Taiwan. This article is presented using both personal observational information as well as a review of information from documents prepared in both countries. There are many cultural differences between the two countries that make it difficult to make a totally parallel comparison. A review of similar legislation that relates to the field of special education, disability categories and membership, placement, special education teacher issues, and other similarities and differences are discussed.

A Comparison of Special Education Service Delivery in the United States and Taiwan

A comparison of differences between the United States and Taiwan can be difficult because of the unique cultures, different school system structures and the different models of special education delivery in the schools. Therefore, this paper is not as much a scientific comparison as a personal reflection based on observational data and relying primarily on practices common in South Dakota for the United States example. This paper will focus on selected similarities and differences present in special education service delivery across the two countries.

Similar legislation has promoted and mandated services for individuals with disabilities. In the United States, PL 94:142, the Education of all Handicapped Children Act which was passed in 1975, and the Special Education Act of 1984 in Taiwan had similar elements. Both of these laws described the goals of special education, student requirements, teacher

requirements, contained information about materials, equipment, aides and budget. The extension of services to preschool age students happened in the United States in PL 99:457 and in Taiwan through the 1997 Amendment of Special Education Act. Policies of assessment, identification, and school enrollment for the disabled were further developed through IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) in 1990 and through the 1998 Guidelines of Identification and School Enrollment in Taiwan. In both countries, there has also been legislation to safeguard the legal rights and opportunities for social involvement of individuals with disabilities. In Taiwan in 1997 this was passed in the Handicapped Protection Act. In the United States this was first required through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and later in the American with Disabilities Act in 1990. Although this legislation was not exactly the same across the two countries, there are many similarities.

As can be noted from the legislation that has been passed in both countries, there is a strong emphasis on improving the welfare and human rights of persons with disabilities in both countries. In addition, there has

been an emphasis on ensuring qualifications of special education teachers. In both countries students have IEP's (individual education programs) based on student's needs. There has also been an emphasis on providing multiple learning environments to increase student's self-care, social skills, and vocational-adaptive skills. In both countries, there has been a strong push toward providing special education networking to provide information and consultative services where needed.

Funding of special education services is quite different in the two countries. Through the Special Education Act in Taiwan, the central government, which is the highest form of government in Taiwan, requires that 3% of the whole education budget of the central government be devoted to special education. An additional 5% of the whole local government education budget is devoted to special education. In the United States, special education funding occurs through flow through monies from the federal government and grants. There is no set percentage that is consistent based on general education funding since education funding is primarily a state and local responsibility in the United States. State and local funding

make up a large proportion of the funding of special education. The national estimated total cost of special education in 1995 was $36 billion (U. S. Department of Education, 1997).

The percent of special education students in each country based on disability area is somewhat different. Table 1 contains these percentages based on disability category for Taiwan in 1992 (Ministry of Education, 1999), the whole United States in 1995-1996 school year (U.S. Department of Education, 1997), and South Dakota in the 1999-2000 school year (S.D. Department of Education and Cultural Affairs, 2000). It should be noted that there are disability categories that are not clearly delineated in the data sources used for this table for some disabilities in other locations. For example, Taiwan contains a separate category for facial deformities which is not used in the United States. In addition, it appears all forms of hearing impairments including deafness appear to be categorized under the singular category in Taiwan whereas in the United States these are separate categories including the category of deaf-blind which is not available in the data source from Taiwan used for this comparison.

Table 1

Percent of Special Education Student by Location

	Taiwan 1992	United States 1995-1996	South Dakota 1999-2000
Mental Retardation	41.46	11.5	8.9
Visual Impairments	2.56	0.5	0.33
Hearing Impairments	3.81	1.3	0.6
Speech Disorders	3.86	20.2	25.4
Physical Handicaps	4.57	1.2	0.7
Health Impairments	2.79	2.6	2.77
Behavior Disorders	9.38	8.6	3.48
Learning Disabilities	20.53	51.2	45.03
Facial Deformity	0.42		
Autism	0.79	0.6	1.2
Multiple Handicaps	9.68	1.9	3.95
Deaf			0.26
Deaf Blind		0.2	0.01

The greatest difference in percentages noted was the high percentage of students with disabilities in Taiwan in the category of mental retardation compared to that same category in the United States and South Dakota. Another area of disparity is that there are far fewer students designated as having speech disorders in Taiwan than in the United States or South Dakota. The United States and South Dakota also document far greater incidence of learning disabilities than in Taiwan. These differences appear to be due to differing criteria for qualification in a particular disability category.

The educational placements of students was another area that was reviewed. Using the 1992 National Census of Exceptional Children findings in Taiwan, it was determined that 2.121 percent of the general population are considered to have a disability. In Taiwan, students with mild and moderate disabilities were placed in regular classes, resource rooms and special schools. Students with severe and profound disabilities were placed in self-contained classes, special schools or were given homebound education. In the United States a similar finding of a range of educational placements was

found. Data in the United States for Students from age 3-21 from the school year 1995-1996 indicated that 45.4% are educated in the regular class for more than 80% of the day or more, 28.7% in resource rooms, 21.7% in separate classes, 3.1% in separate schools, .7% in residential facilities and .5% in homebound or hospital schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). In the United States, there are special education classes in all schools, however, this is not true in all schools in Taiwan.

There are many similarities in the curriculum used in Taiwan and the United States, particularly for students with mental retardation. In both countries there is an emphasis on oral, reading, and written language skills, math skills, functional life skills, vocational skills, leisure skills and social skills. In the United States, there appear to be more commercial curriculum materials available for purchase. In Taiwan, teachers often create many of their curriculum materials. Taiwan also has an annual competition for the best curriculum design which is not a practice in the United States.

The training of special education teachers was also compared looking at Taiwan and specifically at the state of South Dakota since teacher

preparation requirements vary by state. In both countries, teachers of special education students require specialized training. In Taiwan, special education teachers must complete a one year internship. They must pass the certification teaching exam to be a special education teacher. If their bachelor's degree is not in special education, they must pass an entrance exam and take about 40 credits along with the year-long internship. In South Dakota, a special education teacher must complete a 10 week student teaching which is equivalent to the internship in Taiwan. There is currently no state exam required for licensure in South Dakota but some other states in the United States do have licensure exams. If teachers do not have a bachelor's degree in special education, they must meet the certification requirements for special education which include about 36-42 credits and the 10 week internship. In Taiwan, prior to 2002, the future special education teacher tuition was free for some students in the teacher universities but the teachers must work in special education for four years. In South Dakota, tuition is paid by the individual seeking certification.

Review of special education services in Taiwan and the United States has resulted in finding far more similarities than differences. The funding system appears to be quite different. Another area of difference appears to be in the categories of disabilities. Perhaps the most important point that can be learned through this comparison is, however, that the citizens of both countries have supported legislation to provide for the educational and life-long needs of individuals with disabilities. This important similarity in valuing all individuals is important.

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